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## Senator Dodd's Grave Charges

*Claim Press Brought Diem's Downfall  
Is at Heart a Criticism of U. S. Policy*

The Connecticut Democrat, Senator Dodd, has had printed and distributed to members of Congress the report of the United Nations' fact-finding mission to South Viet Nam.

No evidence was produced of an organized religious persecution of the Buddhists by the Catholics of the Diem regime. There was no sound foundation for the emotional basis on which this Government withdrew its support of Mr. Diem and exposed him to opposition forces which overthrew his government and murdered him.

Evidence taken by the fact-finding mission supports the belief that a "suicide promotion squad" recruited monks for immolation, that the agitation was essentially political rather than moral or religious.

By these false tokens we justified policies which undermined a regime that was fully dedicated to the war against the Communists in the north. Ever since then the war has been going badly and those who succeeded Mr. Diem have themselves been routed.

Pressure for neutralization and withdrawal has grown so rapidly under Gen. de Gaulle's initiative that President Johnson is compelled to consider a far deeper commitment of American forces in his determination to win.

But the war is not likely to be won soon in any dramatic or conclusive action. We may make many more mistakes before the war is won. And we have plenty of time to

examine the shockingly serious charges brought by Senator Dodd in his capacity as chairman of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

The charge is that misleading reports in the American press created an atmosphere for American blunders, not alone in this case but in a long succession of events in Yugoslavia, China and Cuba.

"Now," states Senator Dodd, "we have been the victim of still another hoax, in consequence of which the government of Ngo Dinh Diem has been destroyed and a chaotic situation has been created that will make a Communist takeover more difficult to resist." The Senator compares this latest "hoax" to the anti-Mikhailovich campaign that created conditions for the rise of Mr. Tito in Yugoslavia, to the anti-Chiang Kai-shek campaign that preceded the rise of the "agrarian reformer" Communists in China, and to the pro-Castro sentiment that helped plant communism in Cuba.

It is Senator Dodd's contention that the American people, Congress and the administration were misled by inaccurate reporting "in certain leading newspapers" to a degree that caused the betrayal of our best interests. "I believe that it might be helpful if members of the press were to ask themselves some questions about how important American newspapers could so mislead us in these situations," Senator Dodd said.

It would be hard to imagine

a more serious charge against the press from a responsible source than Senator Dodd's accusation. He is not alone in his views. Many officials, particularly in Congress, who disagree with United States policies in critical areas, think that the press has lent itself by delusion or design to misleading reporting.

The charge is not unfamiliar. Officials like to blame the press when their affairs go wrong. At least in Viet Nam, we have been confused by so many official, as well as unofficial reports, that we can look with skepticism on authoritative statements by both officials and journalists.

Senator Dodd, in his impatience with what he reads in the papers, may be groping for a truth which he cannot find solely in his accusation against the press. This truth could be that the press has faithfully reflected the prevailing view of the most responsible officials in these critical situations at a given time. If that is true, then we come back to the real problem.

This problem is that the responsible officials are torn between two poles. They shrink from all-out decisive action or counter-action because of its possible consequence of major warfare. But they cannot find, especially in such places as Cuba and Viet Nam, the effective measure short of major war which will stem the expansion of communism. It is easy to criticize them for this but very hard to give them the right answer, except after they have made a mistake.

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